

TOOLBOX TALK – *Safe Working at Height' & Emergency Rescue Plans*

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Falling from a height is a major cause of fatalities in the construction industry. In 2023 there was seven related falls from height resulting in fatalities in Ireland. It is imperative to ensure that all work at height is properly planned, and that the required personnel have completed a comprehensive Work at Height Training Program (i.e. Scaffolding, MEWPs etc.). It must set out the required controls and provisions to cater for the risk at hand. A robust Work at Height Rescue Plan must be in operation and rescue drills completed at regular intervals. Ensure to implement practical measures to reduce the risk of personnel falling while working at height. The equipment utilised for work at height must be thoroughly inspected, with valid inspection records available at all times.



Contributor's Shared Advice:

- Plan and organise the sequence of work with the project team.
- Plan for associated hazard, i.e.:
 - Falling from height, overturning and ejection of occupants, collisions, entanglement etc.
- Risk Assess all work at height, prior to conducting work at height activities.
- Ensure a comprehensive Work at Height training program is conducted.
- Select the correct Work at Height equipment for the works in question.
- Always carry out visual check of working at height equipment prior to use. Report any defects immediately.
- Consider environmental factors– if wet, windy and/or icy conditions can have a serious impact on safety at height.
- Ensure ground conditions are stable, free of debris and in good order when operating MEWPs etc

Emergency Rescue Plan (Work at Heights):

Working at Height Rescue Plans should include specific details and procedures for rescuing personnel in the event of a fall or other emergency situations. The plan should outline step-by-step instructions that are clear and concise to follow in the event of an emergency. Personnel must complete the required work at height training and be competent for the works associated. It is imperative to conduct a Site-Specific Risk Assessment to identify potential hazards and risks associated with work at height. This could involve assessing the type of work being done, the equipment being utilised and any environmental factors that could impact safety. The plan should also specify who is responsible for carrying out each aspect of the rescue procedure, including communication with emergency services and coordination with external agencies, where required. Personal fall protection systems are an essential part of any effective rescue plan. Selecting the correct personal fall protection systems is crucial. The equipment you need to use depends on the environment in which the work at height is performed. It is critical to choose the right work equipment and collective measures to prevent falls.

Types of Personal Fall Protection Systems / Work Equipment include:

- *Fall arrest systems* - *Fall restraint systems* - *Work positioning systems*

The equipment must be defined by European Standards and must have CE marking. It's critical to have regular rescue drills to ensure site personnel are fully aware of their duties, obligations, and that the approved Work at Height equipment is good working order. They must be fully competent in demobilising the selected Mobile Elevated Work Platform (MEWPs) if required in an emergency.